

Guidance for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

1. General

1.1 In this document, “children” means “children and young people under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults”, and “Teams” means the “Children’s and Young People’s Workers”.

1.2 The statement given below was agreed at the Church Members’ Meeting held on _____, and will be reviewed annually. A copy will be given to all Church members working with children. Those to whom this applies will be required to sign an appropriate certificate indicating their agreement and understanding of this guidance document.

1.3 The Named Person, who is _____, will hold signed certificates centrally. The Deputy Named Person is _____

1.4 The aim is to show the love of God to children in a safe and secure environment, through which we pray that they will come to a personal faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, and then become members of _____ Church.

1.5 The means to achieve this aim is contact with children, who are members of a Church family, or those with little or no connection with the Church, and will be made through a range of appropriate group activities.

1.6 CRB Checks are still required, and forms and advice can be obtained from the UEC office.

1.7 The exceptional use of a non-DBS-checked person is allowable only when a DBS-checked person is present and in full view of the activities.

2. Commitment

2.1 Church Members will pray for the children and the Teams, both in private and at Church-organised formal meetings, and will take an interest in the work. They will welcome and befriend the children and other family members as and when contact is made through special services and activities. They will assist and support the Teams as and when appropriate, and be open to the Lord’s guidance with regard to joining the Teams. Church members will at all times share the responsibility for preventing any physical abuse of the children involved in Church activities, reporting any suspected or discovered abuse to the Named Person.

2.2 The Teams will always approach the work prayerfully and with thorough preparation, will love the children for Jesus’ sake, will work in co-operation and mutual support and care with each other, seeing the work not in isolation, but as part of the work and witness of the whole Church. They will recognise that this will involve attendance at planning meetings and submission of reports to the Church Members’ Meeting and/or Officers as requested.

2.3 They will undertake training as appropriate and available, and will at all times share the responsibility for preventing any physical abuse of children, reporting any suspected or discovered abuse to the Named Person.

2.4 Leadership of individual groups will only be undertaken by Church members.

2.5 All children's group's workers and helpers are directly responsible to their Pastoral Team or Church Leadership.

3. Guidelines for the prevention of abuse

3.1 Children in our care need to be protected from all kinds of abuse, and the Teams need to be protected from false accusation. Team members need to guard against actions which might be misunderstood, and situations which could render them vulnerable. The following is considered to be best practice.

3.2 Avoid private one-to-one situations. Do not be alone with a child where the activity cannot be seen, even when giving hospitality at home. In a private counselling situation, leave a door open, or ensure that another adult is within calling distance, and that the child knows this. If none of this is possible, inform another adult that the interview is taking place.

3.3 The Church will provide a safe, well-lit location.

3.4 Children awaiting collection after meetings must be supervised and not left at risk.

3.5 Language: always speak and behave respectfully, using appropriate and polite language, avoiding shouting, sarcastic remarks or unkind nicknames.

3.6 Physical contact: watch body language, avoiding any actions that could be misunderstood. Only touch a child to comfort him or her if it is absolutely essential.

3.7 Transport arrangements: always ensure that parents are informed of any transport arrangements. If it is necessary to give a lone child a lift, they should sit on the back seat and seatbelts must be worn.

3.8 Toilet needs: take special care if younger children need help with the toilet. If a parent is present, get them to deal with soiling accidents; otherwise ensure that another adult is present when washing or changing.

3.9 Sleeping arrangements: if away from home, do not share sleeping accommodation with children, and respect shower and toilet privacy. Show sensitivity and care when dealing with issues such as homesickness.

3.10 Safety: Teams are responsible at all times for the children's safety.

3.11 Accident: in the event of an accident occurring, first aid treatment should be given and recorded in the accident book and signed by the person administering first aid. Where possible, a parent of the child should countersign the book.

3.12 Awareness of sexual matters: this means avoiding sexually suggestive comments, and participation in rough, physical or sexually provocative games.

4. Types of abuse

4.1 Physical: where bodies are hurt or injured.

4.2 Emotional: where threats or taunts cause fear, and when responsibilities cause distress because they are beyond the person's abilities.

4.3 Sexual: where adults or other young people use children to satisfy their own sexual desires.

4.4 Neglect: where adults fail to care for children, leading to impaired health and development.

5. Signs of abuse

5.1 THIS IS A VERY DELICATE AREA. While the following MAY suggest abuse, there may also be other quite sensible explanations. DO NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS.

5.2 Physical: unexplained or hidden injuries and lack of medical attention.

5.3 Emotional: reverting to younger behaviour, nervousness, sudden under-achievement, attention-seeking, running away, stealing and lying.

5.4 Sexual: pre-occupation with sexual matters evident in word, play, drawings, being sexually-provocative with adults, disturbed sleep, nightmares, bedwetting, secretive relationships with adults or children, stomach pains with no apparent cause.

5.5 Neglect: appears ill-cared for and unhappy, is withdrawn and aggressive, has lingering injuries or health problems.

6. Procedures if abuse is disclosed, discovered or suspected

6.1 Do not delay, but:

- Do consult the Named Person immediately or if unavailable, the Deputy.

- Do not start to investigate, but:

- DO NOT ACT ALONE if immediate action seems necessary,

- Do not promise confidentiality, and

- Do not approach the parents.

6.2 If the child wants to talk there and then, ideally ensure that there is another adult present and TAKE NOTES USING THE CHILD'S EXACT WORDS.

6.3 If the Named Person considers there is cause for further action, he/she will inform the Social Services, who will decide:

- How to proceed further,

- Whether to inform the parents, and

- Whether to involve other agencies, including the Police.

6.4 Although this may appear negative, remember our aim, and be positive in the Lord's Name.

7. Guidance for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Acceptance Certificate.

Full Name: _____

I certify that:

I have been given a copy of the above document,
I have read and understood it fully,
I have attended a training session on this subject
which was led by _____, and
I agree with this policy and accept the need to follow it at all times.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please return this completed Certificate to: _____